

the IG SPECIAL FRAUD ALERT

April 2021



KEN BURKE, CPA

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
AND COMPTROLLER

VOICE

**You Have A
VOICE
Report
Cybercrime**

FRAUD ALERT

SIGN UP TODAY and receive free
alerts when a document with your
name is recorded in Official Records.
Protect yourself from fraud.
CLICK HERE.

GET IN TOUCH:

Write:

Public Integrity Unit
Division of Inspector General
Fraud Hotline
510 Bay Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33756

Call:

(727) 45FRAUD
(727) 453-7283

Fax:

(727) 464-8386

E-mail:

fraudhotline@mypinellasclerk.org

Internet:

www.mypinellasclerk.org
www.twitter.com/pinellasig
www.facebook.com/igpinellas



investigation of fraud, waste, and abuse.

Among other responsibilities, the Pinellas County Division of Inspector General is responsible for auditing and investigating operations of the Board of County Commissioners, operations of the Clerk and Comptroller, contractors doing business with the County, and other functions for which the Board of County Commissioners provides financial support or is the ex-officio governing body. A key function of the Inspector General is the

What is Fraud, Waste, and Abuse, and when and how should you report?

- **Fraud:** Obtaining something of value through willful misrepresentation, including, but not limited to, intentional misstatements or intentional omissions of amounts or disclosures in financial statements to deceive users of financial statements, theft of an entity's assets, bribery, or the use of one's position for personal enrichment through the deliberate misuse or misapplication of an organization's resources. This may include, but is not limited to, any dishonest act to include forgery or alteration of any document; misappropriation of funds or supplies; improper handling or reporting of money or financial transactions; profiting oneself or others as a result of inside knowledge; destruction or intentional disappearance of records, furniture, fixtures or equipment; accepting or seeking anything of material value from vendors or persons providing services or materials to Pinellas County for personal benefit; and/or any similar or related irregularity.

- **Waste:** The act of using or expending resources unreasonably, carelessly, extravagantly, or for no useful purpose, and can include the unnecessary incurring of costs as a result of inefficient practices, sysyems, or controls.

- **Abuse:** The behavior that is deficient or improper when compared with behavior that a prudent person would consider a reasonable and necessary operational practice given the facts and circumstances. The term includes the misuse of authority or position for personal gain, and includes violations and circumventions of laws, rules, contracts, departmental or agency regulations, or best practices, which impair the effective and efficient execution of operations.

Persons reporting fraud, waste, and abuse directed against the County must provide sufficient details to facilitate an investigation. Immediate reporting is necessary while facts are still fresh in the mind of the complainant. All reports must answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how in the following manner:

- Who was involved? (names, addresses, phone numbers, if available)
- What happened? (summary of events, additional sources of evidence)
- When did it happen? (date, time, frequency)
- Where did it happen? (location, city, state)
- Why was it done? (any known motive for committing such act)
- How did it happen? (what scheme was used)

Providing supporting documentation directly related to the complaint assists in timely preliminary review and a more efficient investigation, if warranted. We may not be able to investigate complaints that are too vague or cannot be corroborated.

If you suspect Fraud, Waste, and Abuse you can report it one of the following ways:

Call:

Fraud, Waste & Abuse Hotline: (727) 45FRAUD (453-7283)

Fax:

(727) 464-8386

E-Mail:

fraudhotline@pinellascounty.org

Online Form:

<https://www.mypinellasclerk.org/Home/Inspector-General#599117-report-fraud-waste--abuse>

Write:

Public Integrity Unit
Division of Inspector General
510 Bay Ave.
Clearwater, FL 33756

Once the report is received, a preliminary review of allegations is made to determine jurisdiction and the probability that the alleged acts could have occurred. Credible complaints outside of the Inspector General's jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate agency. Program-related, personnel, or administrative matters often do not result in an investigation being opened. In these situations, we may refer the complaint, when appropriate, to the applicable County department. Complainants who provide contact information receive notification whether the complaint will be investigated.

Referrals are made to the State Attorney when evidence suggests that a criminal activity has or may have occurred.

Whistle-blower's Act:

By virtue of the Whistle-blower's Act, current employees and contractors who report suspected wrongdoing or fraudulent activities meeting the definition in the Whistle-blower's Act (Sections 112.3187 – 112.31895, Florida Statutes) are protected from retaliation by management or other employees.

Section 112.3187(5), Florida Statutes, requires the following type of information to be disclosed in order for a complainant to be afforded Whistle-blower protection:

"(5) NATURE OF INFORMATION DISCLOSED. —The information disclosed under this section must include:

(a) Any violation or suspected violation of any federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor which creates and presents a substantial and specific danger to the public's health, safety, or welfare.

(b) Any act or suspected act of gross mismanagement, malfeasance, misfeasance, gross waste of public funds, suspected or actual Medicaid fraud or abuse, or gross neglect of duty committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor."

Section 112.3187(3)(e), Florida Statutes, defines gross mismanagement as follows:

"Gross mismanagement" means a continuous pattern of managerial abuses, wrongful or arbitrary and capricious actions, or fraudulent or criminal conduct which may have a substantial adverse economic impact."

You may also refer to the Pinellas County Fraud, Waste & Abuse Policy for additional information and resources:
https://www.mypinellasclerk.org/Portals/0/Inspector%20General/Printable%20Resources/fraud_brochure.pdf.

Tips to remember:

- Be clear and concise
- State exactly what you want done
- Do not write in an angry, sarcastic, or threatening manner
- Include the name, contact information, and all other relevant information described previously in this newsletter